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ABSTRACT

To investigate the effects on students' reading attitudes and interests of sustained silent reading as opposed to reading aloud, a study divided 50 urban third graders into two groups, with 25 in each group. One group of students engaged in an 8-week period of sustained silent reading which was teacher directed before and after the reading process. The other group was read to aloud by the teacher for 8 weeks using carefully selected books of varying genres. The Estes Attitudes Scale of reading attitudes was used as a pre and posttest measure for both groups. No significant differences in attitudes or interests were found between the two groups. (One table of data is included, 28 references are attached, and the scores and test instruments are appended.) (SR)

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A STUDY OF THE EFFECTS OF SUSTAINED SILENT READING AND ORAL READING ON READING ATTITUDES AND INTERESTS

by

Caroline McHugh

Presented in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree, Kean College, New Jersey

December 1989

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ABSTRACT

This study was concerned with the effects of Sustained Silent Reading and oral reading on reading attitudes and interests. This study was conducted with a population of twenty-five third grade children from a low income urban area. The children were randomly divided into two groups. The results of this study indicated that there was no significant difference in the attitudes and interests of the two groups.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the major goals of all educators should be the development of positive attitudes toward reading by the students they teach. Far too many students dislike reading and do almost anything to avoid becoming involved with printed material. Even with teacher encouragement, many students do not read outside of school. (Allington, 1975) Educators need to search for and use methods which will inspire students to explore the wonderful people, places, and ideas found through reading books of fiction and non-fiction, newspapers, poetry, and other types of reading material.

Increasing student's interests in reading requires educators to model certain behaviors which will spark a student's interest in reading. Reading aloud to children and Sustained Silent Reading are two ways in which educators can trigger and increase student's interests.

Both of these methods require a great deal of time and effort if they are to be used correctly. Each has its own unique requirements which need to be fulfilled in order to ensure success. The rewards of success, however, far outway the time and effort expended. The reward, of course, is the development of interested,

active student readers who enjoy reading and develop an insatiable desire to read.

If we want our schools to succeed, educators must determine which methods best increase reading interest, therefore, allowing for increased skill development and practice. All of which contributes to a more literate population.

Developing methods which will motivate children to read has always been of great concern to educators. Increased interest in reading by students is viewed by those who work with children as being worth far more then impressive statistical gains on standardized tests. (Doake, 1985) Two methods which have long been considered as motivators of better attitudes toward reading are Sustained Silent Reading and reading aloud to children.

Uninterrupted Sustained Silent Reading was first introduced by Lyman Hunt in 1970. It was a structured activity in which students self-selected books and were given fixed time periods for reading their self-selected material silently. (Levine, 1984) There should be a wide variety of easy, hard, fiction, non-fiction, long and short books from which children can select their reading materials. (Durkin, 1987) These materials

should be available in a classroom library. In order for noteworthy increases in reading interests to occur, the teacher must also model good reading habits by actively participating in Sustained Silent Reading. (McCracken & McCracken, 1978)

In a survey conducted by McCracken (1971) it was reported that after six months of SSR, students reported that they had learned to like reading as well as the quiet time that it provided in the school day. One reason researchers believe SSR works so well to increase interest in reading is because the students are given time to read whatever they want for pleasure without the demand to perform. (Allington, 1975). Conclusions reached through research indicated that Sustained Silent Reading needs to be increased and given more prominence at all grade levels. If a conscientious program of SSR is incorporated into the primary grades, perhaps more positive attitudes toward reading will persist throughout the student's lives. (Levine, 1984)

Many of a child's attitudes come from the importance that adult role models place on reading. In the pamphlet, "Help Your Child Become a Good Reader," published by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, it is stressed that a child's success and

interest in reading is said to depend largely on acquired knowledge from discussions and experiences, feelings and from reading aloud to the child.

According to Chew, 1986, children benefit from being read to orally because their sense of security is increased by the closeness of an adult. The child is also given the chance to perceive printed formats, begin to assimilate the basics of story construction as well as the development of prior knowledge base which will aid in good comprehension.

The benefits of reading to children increase when reading aloud continues in the school setting. Reading aloud to students or allowing them to read aloud to each other stimulates their interest in what they are reading about and in reading itself. (Chadwick, 1982) Oral reading also provides a good model for the importance of carefully pronunciation and enunciation of words, appropriate volume and an expression that succeeds in communicating feelings as well as facts. (Durkin, 1978) The one thing to remember is that children like to be read to and that there should be time for reading to children on a regular basis.

One study conducted by Sterl Artley (1975) showed that one experience remembered by junior and senior

education majors which "turned them on" to reading most was being read to by their teachers. These teachers also talked about different books as well as discussed the books they read. Both Sustained Silent Reading and Reading Aloud are methods which advocates of each feel promote positive attitudes in reading. In Jim Trelease's (1982) The Reading Aloud Handbook, he promotes Sustained Silent Reading as reading aloud's natural partner. He feels that educators need to use combinations of these methods to promote reading as an essential tool for enjoying and using all the resources available to us.

HYPOTHESIS

This study was established to determine the effects of Sustained Silent Reading as opposed to Reading Aloud on student's attitudes and interests in reading. It was hypothesized that in an urban, third grade class there would be no significant difference between the attitudes and interests of a sample of students engaged in Sustained Silent Reading when compared to a sample being read to orally by the teacher.

PROCEDURES

A class of pre-assigned third graders were randomly

assigned into two samples by giving each student a number and then using a Table of Random Numbers to construct the two samples with 25 students in each sample. A reading interests and attitudes inventory was given to both samples of students to determine pre-test scores on the inventory. Half of the students were engaged in an eight week period of Sustained Silent Reading which was teacher directed before and after the reading process. the second group engaged in a program of being read to aloud by the teacher using carefully selected books of varying genres. The time period was also eight weeks. At the end of the eight week period, the students were given the reading interests and attitudes inventory and the responses compared using student's to determine statistical differences, if any, between the samples.

RESULTS

The Estes Attitudes Scale of reading attitude was administered as a pre and post-test groups to two groups of third graders designated as either an experimental or a control group. The mean and standard deviation were computed for each group. The above information was then utilized to obtain a t to ascertain if there was a significant difference in reading attitudes between the

control and experimental group. A one-tailed test was used to compute the level of significant difference. The results, as shown in Table I, indicated that there were no significant differences between the experimental and

TABLE I

THE RESULTS OF THE ESTES ATTITUDE SCALE

	MEAN	S.D.	t	
EXPERIMENTAL				
Pre-Test	20	5.28	.46	N.S.
Post-Test	20.85	3.93		
CONTROL				
Pre-Test	20.75	4.56	.50	N.S.
Post-Test	21.67	5.00		

control groups for both the pre-test and post-test.

An interesting inventory was administered to the same two groups of third graders. the test was given as a pre and post-test measure. Results were tabulated and it was noted that only slight changes, or in some cases no changes occurred in the pre and post-test scores and, therefore, statistical tests were precluded.

The following questions show no change in attitude

from pre to post-test. When asked, "Do you ever read to your parents?" and "Do you have books of your own at home?" both the Sustained Silent Reading and the oral reading groups reported that they had books in their homes. The types of books were story books, bedtime books and the bible. Children who were reading to their parents before the study were still reading at the post-test. There was one change from the orally-read-to-group; one subject indicated that in the pre-test questionnaire he sometimes read to his parents but in the post-test questionnaire he indicated that he does not read to his parents.

Other slight changes which were interesting were those students in the orally-read-to-group whose parents read to them dropped from nine at the pre-test to six at the post-test with one reporting being read to sometimes. Yes responses to, "Do you have a favorite book?" went from ten to eleven in the Sustained Silent Reading group and from ten to eight in the orally-read-to-group. Although almost 20 children from both groups indicated that they did have a favorite book, very few could say what their favorite book was. All the other results are in Appendix B.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study set out to discover which experience, Sustained Silent Reading or being read to orally would improve reading attitudes and interests. The results of the study show that there were no significant changes for either of the samples.

One limitation on the study was that it was conducted over a short period of time. Perhaps pre-testing in the Fall and post-testing in the Spring would establish more of a difference between the samples. It might be that a longer exposure to Sustained Silent Reading or being read to orally would produce more positive and conclusive results.

It also seemed that even though the students were told to answer honestly, that some may have responded to the questions in a way which they feel would be the "right" answers. Since this study was conducted in an urban setting with third graders, the possibility exists that these children wish to please their teacher above all. If this is the case, then knowing that reading is important to their teacher may have influenced their responses to the questionnaire.

Another important issue to consider is that although research supports the value of Sustained Silent Reading

in the elementary classroom, it is essential to remember that at the third grade level we are still dealing with young children. These children when given a choice generally may choose to have their teacher read to them rather than having to read on their own. These are just a few of the assumptions one can make when dealing with this question of Sustained Silent Reading versus orally-reading-to-children.

These results offer valuable implications to elementary classroom teachers. One implication is that this study did not generate any negative attitudes towards reading. In fact, both samples showed a great deal of enthusiasm during these reading activities. It may be concluded that more research on this subject is necessary and essential if we are to be innovative educators of the future.

A replication of this study should include a control group, one which receives neither treatment, SSR or being read to, since it is possible that both treatments are, more or less, equally effective in affecting achievement and a comparison with a control sample would help clarify this issue.

RELATED RESEARCH:

SUSTAINED SILENT READING AND READING ALOUD

The roles of Sustained Silent Reading and reading aloud have been of interest to researchers and educators for almost three decades. Many studies have been conducted to discover what effects Sustained Silent Reading and reading aloud have had on increasing comprehension, building vocabulary, raising standardized test scores as well as improving students attitudes and interests toward the reading act. In focusing on the research dealing with improving attitudes and interests as they relate to Sustained Silent Reading and reading aloud, it is necessary to briefly examine the early research done on Sustained Silent Reading as well as reading aloud.

SUSTAINED SILENT READING

Sustained Silent Reading was first introduced by Lymann Hunt in 1971. He conceived the program to be an individualized school reading program which would promote student involvement as well as increase student proficiency by practicing higher level reading skills rather than word recognition and oral reading skills which were stressed in basal series. McCracken (1971) perfected Sustained Silent Reading to fit the specific needs of recreational reading. Grubaugh (1986) listed

McCracken's guidelines for proper use of Sustained Silent Reading:

1. Everyone reads.
2. Teachers model good reading behavior by reading themselves.
3. Sustained Silent Reading takes place at the same time each day, promoting consistency of the activity.
4. Readers are allowed to choose materials without pressure or coercion and from a wide selection of materials.
5. Interruptions are not tolerated.

Although many studies have been conducted regarding achievement and Sustained Silent Reading, it is only recently that researchers have taken a look at students habits and attitudes toward reading. According to Wiesndanger and Birlem (1983), changes in attitudes toward reading may have long term effects on reading achievement, therefore, suggesting that schools implement techniques like Sustained Silent Reading into the curriculum in order to develop and maintain positive attitudes toward reading.

One study conducted by Milton (1980) showed that students had a less favorable attitude toward reading after the use of the Sustained Silent Reading program than before the program was initiated. One reason for

the failure of the program was due to inadequate inservice workshops on the Sustained Silent Reading technique. Another study which reported a decline in positive attitudes toward reading was conducted with seventh graders by Mikulecky and Wolf (1977). In contrast to the above two studies, Reed (1977) examined attitudes toward reading at the secondary level. Results indicated no significant differences between experimental and control groups. She noted that being required to read for sustained periods of time did not foster negative attitudes toward reading.

Nine studies which showed that reading attitudes improved were reviewed by Wiesendanger and Birlem (1983). In Cline's (1980) study, students from grades three to twelve were included and their attitudes toward reading improved. The other studies conducted by Pfau (1966), Lawson (1968), Petre (1971), Hanson (1972), Wilmont (1975), Vacca (1976), Wolf (1977), and Langford (1978) also showed that students who were involved in Sustained Silent Reading had developed a more positive attitude toward reading then students engaged in other programs.

The use of Sustained Silent Reading has moved east according to Aranha (1985). In schools in

developing countries, students often have little exposure to reading as an enjoyable activity. Using Sustained Silent Reading in a school in India introduced fourth graders to the pleasures of reading and improved their reading achievement as well. Two fourth grade classes took part in the study. One fourth grade class was introduced twice a week to Sustained Silent Reading while the control group received the same language program without Sustained Silent Reading. the attitudes of the students were measured using the Estes Attitudes Scale (1981). Pre-tests were given in July 1983 and a post-test in March 1984. The mean change in scores for both groups resulted in a difference of 2.33 favoring the experimental group (p .05). At a book exhibit that both classes attended at the end of the year, the students who had Sustained Silent Reading showed a wider range in selection and interest than those students who did not participate in Sustained Silent Reading.

Trelease (1982), reports that Sustained Silent Reading studies done to date report immediate attitude changes. "Junior and senior high schools show significant changes in student's feelings toward the library, voluntary reading, assigned reading, and the importance of reading." At the secondary level, studies

report no significant changes in a positive or negative way, on skill development. However, at the elementary level, both attitudes and skills improved with Sustained Silent Reading.

READING ALOUD

> "Most people, regardless of age, can be captivated by a good story teller. Children are especially susceptible to the charm of a good story being read by a good reader. Therefore, teachers should consider the reading of good stories to children as one of their major responsibilities in the development of positive attitudes toward reading."
>
> (Smith 1980)

Many authorities on reading are working very hard to stress the importance of parents and teachers reading to children daily in order to promote positive attitudes toward reading. Yet despite their work authors such as Trelease (1982) have studied national surveys of teachers and found that more than 60 percent of third and fourth grade teachers did not read aloud regularly to their classes. By the sixth grade the percentage was at about 74 percent. This decline in reading aloud, according to Trelease, correlated with a decline in grade level reading performance.

According to Butler (1980), reading scores will improve as a result of a regular reading aloud program.

She goes on to say that many teachers experience a sense of guilt about taking time from their teaching to read aloud to children. However, McCormick (1977), cited studies which provided evidence of the direct relationship between reading aloud to children and reading performance, language development, and most importantly the development of reading interests.

Trelease (1982) warns educators and parents against misreading a child's effort at learning to read as a sign that they love to read and, therefore, do not need to be sold on the idea of reading. Historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. (1979) advocates reading aloud to children because he feels it is one of the best ways to encourage children to read when they are older. Schlesinger feels that great children's literature delights a child and creates a fictional world which leaves the child with insights and experiences on which he can make reflections which will enrich the child's life. All of these positive experiences with reading promote positive attitudes toward reading.

Reading orally is important because it is a way to communicate the author's message to the listener. (Artley 1972) According to Taylor and Connor (1982) it is also important because it is the "natural transition"

from speech to print for the child who is learning to read. Ross (1986) advocates teaching children to be good oral readers. She feels that educators often neglect teaching children to communicate orally because they are concentrating on teaching discrete reading skills to levels of mastery. Trelease's (1982) attitude toward the teaching of reading skills is similar to Ross'. He feels that although there is a definite need for skill work, it is imperative that we let children know there is something more to reading than the practicing of skills. he feels the best way to achieve this lesson is to "read to them everyday, allowing them to sample the excitement and pleasures they've been practicing for but aren't quite ready or willing to accomplish on their own."

Carol Fisher and Barbara Elleman (1984) have done research on what they call the "Read Aloud Remedy". They have developed a list of ten reasons to read aloud to children of all ages:

1. Reading aloud introduces pupils to new words.

2. Reading aloud introduces pupils to more complex sentence structure.

3. Reading aloud exposes them to more standard forms of sentence structure.

4. Reading aloud exposes pupils to various styles of written language.

5. Reading aloud develops a sense of story.

6. Reading aloud motivates children to refine reading skills.

7. Reading aloud provides structure and motivation for creative writing.

8. Reading aloud serves as a spring board to discussions or creative activities.

9. Reading aloud enriches general knowledge.

10. Reading aloud adds pleasure to the day.

Bruce Chadwick (1982) recalls his days as a young man at summer camp. He had a wonderful time reciting or reading aloud stories of Edgar Allen Poe tales. His audiences would be wrapped up in the world he created in those camp cabins. Chadwick recalls his fondest memories of English as those which involved being read to orally. Reading aloud was the motivation that Chadwick feels pushed him towards reading more on his own, thus, improving his attitudes and interests about reading.

In a study conducted by Gloria Blatt (1981), a group of children were studied for four years. The purpose of the study was to improve reading interests by providing children time to read, using literature to teach reading and by reading aloud to children. The results indicated

that students interests develop because they are influenced by the social setting in which they are acquainted. When children see that adults value reading, they are affected in a positive way and, thus, their attitudes and interests improve.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

RAW SCORES OF ESTES ATTITUDE SCALE

EXPERIMENTAL/SSR GROUP

CHILD	PRE-TEST	POST-TEST
1	16	11
2	21	24
3	19	24
4	23	18
5	26	23
6	8	24
7	15	21
8	22	21
9	18	23
10	25	18
11	21	17
12	18	22
13	28	25

CONTROL/ORALLY READ TO

CHILD	PRE-TEST	POST-TEST
1	24	28
2	25	24
3	17	17
4	19	24
5	19	22
6	18	20
7	26	24
8	26	26
9	19	11
10	25	25
11	11	15
12	20	24

6.	YES	5	6
	NO	8	7
7.	YES	4	4
	NO	9	9
8.	YES	9	9
	NO	4	4
	SOMETIMES	1	0
9.	YES	10	11
	NO	3	2

APPENDIX B (CONTINUED)

CONTROL/ORALLY READ TO

QUESTION NUMBER		PRE-TEST	POST-TEST
2.	YES	9	6
	NO	3	5
	SOMETIMES		1
3.	YES	7	7
	NO	3	4
	SOMETIMES	1	0
4.	YES	9	10
	A LOT	4	5
	SOMETIMES	5	6
	NO	3	2
5.	YES	12	12
	NO	0	0
6.	YES	5	6
	NO	7	6

7.	YES	6	8
	NO	6	4
8.	YES	10	4
	NO	2	7
	SOMETIMES		1
9.	YES	10	8
	NO	2	4

APPENDIX C

INTEREST INVENTORY

Name_____Date_____

1. Who are the people in your family?_____
2. Do your parents ever read to you?_____ When?_____
3. Do you ever read to your parents?_____ When?_____
4. Did you read on your own this summer?_____ A lot?_____Sometimes?_____
5. Do you have any books of your own at home?_____ What kinds?_____
6. Do you get any magazines at home?_____ Which ones?_____
7. Do you have a set of encyclopedias at home?_____
8. Do you ever go to the public library?_____
9. Do you have a favorite book?_____ What is it?_____
10. What is your favorite color?_____
11. What is your favorite food?_____
12. What is your favorite animal?_____
13. What is your favorite television program?_____
14. Where is your favorite place to be?_____
15. What is your favorite thing to do?_____
16. What do you wish for?_____
17. What do you think you would like to be when you grow up?_____Why?_____
18. What do you like to do after school and on weekends?_____
19. Do you collect anything?_____What?_____
20. If you could have any toy you wanted, what would it be?_____
21. If you could have your choice of game to play, what game would you play?_____Why?_____
22. What hobbies or interests do you have?_____
23. What do you like most about school?_____
24. Do you have a best friend?____Who?_____

APPENDIX D

Name_____Date_____

If you agree, mark A
If you don't know, mark ?
If you disagree, mark D

1.	Reading is fun for me.	___	___	___
2.	Books are boring.	___	___	___
3.	Reading is a good way to spare time.	___	___	___
4.	Reading turns me on.	___	___	___
5.	Books do not make good presents.	___	___	___
6.	Reading is rewarding to me.	___	___	___
7.	Reading becomes boring after about a half hour.	___	___	___
8.	Free reading teaches me something.	___	___	___
9.	There should be time for free reading during the school day.	___	___	___
10.	There are many books I hope to read.	___	___	___
11.	Reading is something I can do without.	___	___	___
12.	A certain amount of time during summer should be set aside for reading.	___	___	___
13.	Books usually are good enough to finish.	___	___	___
14.	Reading is not exciting.	___	___	___